

G.R.A.C.E. News

Volume 4, Issue 11

November 2004

Epiphany number # 4 for the boys at Corsicana Residential Treatment Center (C.R.T.C.) the weekend of Oct. 8-10 was just awesome!

As the team gathered Thursday evening there was much concern that the ages of the boys (17 to 20) might be a problem. So before the commissioning ceremony began we had prayer time. We all gathered and prayed for our team members, the boys, and the staff. We claimed the promise of:

Psalms 17:1; Hear a just cause, O Lord attend to my cry; Give ear to my prayer which is not from deceitful lips.

We prayed expecting God to hear our prayers and to grant our petitions. God answered our prayers! God brought us a peace during our prayer time that lasted all the way through the closing Sunday.

Friday morning right on schedule, the boys arrived and we saw on their faces the look of reservations, doubts, questions, anger and anticipation. Soon some of the boys began to relax and feel comfortable with the idea that this whole Epiphany thing may not be so bad after all. During our first meal together the boys began to see for themselves how God's love is passed to them through a team of people He has sent to share with them His love. This concept is totally new to them. They saw the meal tickets and read about people they didn't know who had loved them enough to buy their meal for them.

Continued on page 2

LETTER IN THE NIGHT

This is pretty deep and definitely worth reading! You just can't keep it to yourself; you've got to tell somebody about the love of God! Be Blessed!

One day a woman named Louise fell asleep in her bed, and dreamed a very fitful dream. She dreamed that someone in Hell wrote a letter to her, and it was to be delivered to her by a messenger.

The messenger passed between the lakes of burning fire and brimstone that occupies Hell, and found his way to the door that would lead him to the outside world.

Louise dreamed that the messenger walked to her house, came inside and gently but firmly woke Louise up. He gave her the message, saying only that a friend had wrote it to her from Hell.

Continued on page 3

**The November
G.R.A.C.E. Gathering
St. Luke's UMC, Kilgore,
SATURDAY,
November 13, 2004 @ 12:00P.M.**

(NOON Potluck Lunch, bring your favorite Entrée's, desserts or Salads)

Babe Chick meeting for new pilgrims from any of the previous Walks begins at 11:00AM,

Board meeting at 10:30AM

See the website at www.gracemmaus.org

For maps and more info.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1	Reflections from Epiphany No. 4
1	Letter in the Night
3	Something to smile about
4	Kairos this weekend at the Michael Unit
5	Your GRACE Board Members

We see the evidence that God has been preparing their hearts for this Epiphany for weeks and weeks before our arrival. These boys were so hungry for the message of God's love it was a blessing being His messenger, His chosen vessel to bring the light of the world to those lost and damaged children.

They hurt and we feel their pain, they cry and we cry with them, they ask the questions that are on their hearts and minds and God uses us to bring answers from His Word. They reach out to be touched to be hugged; these simple acts we take for granted don't happen in their world. Their eyes ask the unspoken question, are you real? Demonstrations of love, caring, nurturing from adults is all but nonexistent to them. They are the lost, the forgotten, the kids know one wants and no one knows what to do with so they put them in jails.

Sunday morning an invitation to receive Jesus as Lord was given and **37** young men come forward. Halleluiah, Praise God. What a blessing to see the miracle of salvation take place and to be a part of it. The Holy Spirit was so real so vivid you could feel His presence you knew if you closed your eyes you would see the heavenly hosts and angels dancing and singing.

Luke 15:10; In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Just a few hours later during the time set aside for the boys to tell what the Epiphany had meant to them we heard;

***"I have never been loved before by anyone"
"Thank you for bringing me Jesus"***

One young man stood up and told us this about his Epiphany weekend, "I just came to get the "free food", and before I came I served Satan. I didn't want anything to do with all this Jesus stuff. Satan gave me all I needed he kept me sharp. Then I hear these people these "Old" people telling about love and God and how they have changed and how they have peace because they have given their lives to Jesus. I have never had love and didn't even know what peace meant. So I figure who cares. Then I started to feel weird inside you know, like strange even. I began to listen to these other people and I began to think well maybe I can get a better life if I know Jesus. I used to go to church with my grandmother all the time when I was little. She used to tell me about Jesus. So I watched and I listened and then they

give us this birthday party because they say they love me and God loves me. I ain't ever had a birthday party or cake or nothing like that before. I start thinking is this love? I ask my weekend guide what does it mean to have God's love. She tells me about how Jesus died on that cross a long time ago and how he gave his life for me and that was love. He loved me so much He died for me? Well you know that's kind of a hard thing to believe some dude dies for me 2000 years ago. How can that be, 2000 years ago I wasn't even around you know. Then they tell us to pray and what prayer means and that how we can talk with Jesus and how we can know Him.

Then we do this forgiveness thing where we write all the names of everybody we have hurt or who have hurt us on these pieces of paper. We pray about it and think about it then we nail the names of those we want to forgive to this cross. It was like I was nailing myself to that cross. I really had to think about who I had hurt and write their names down and then the people who had done things to me I had to forgive them, too. That was hard!

Then we were asked if we wanted Jesus in our hearts and wanted to have him as our Lord and that all we had to do was believe he was alive and real and ask him to forgive us like we had forgiven the people who had hurt us. I am thinking, yea well maybe I will and maybe I won't, you know.

So some of my peers are getting up and I think, "not me man", I ain't going up there. The next thing I know, I'm up there crying, telling this preacher dude I am miserable and I want to know Jesus. He asks me some questions I don't even remember and then he asks me to repeat this prayer. I say ok and then he says do I believe Jesus is the living son of God? I say yea and I think to myself what am I doing! I think about it for about a second and I say to myself well I do, so it must be ok. Then the guy tells me I have to ask Jesus to forgive my sins if I am really sorry and want him to. I want what these people have. I know I need to do this if I am going to have Jesus in my heart, so I say yea. We pray some more and I am feeling lighter and warmer all over and now I know I am saved and no body can take that away from me, nobody.

This was my weekend at CRTC Epiphany #4. How was your weekend? Pray for the children, Satan is attacking the ministry and the volunteers.

Jerry Bach

Louise, in her dream, with trembling hands took the letter and read:

**My Friend,
I stand in Judgment now,
And feel that you're to blame somehow.
And never did you point the way.
You knew the Lord in truth and glory,
But never did you tell the story.
My knowledge then was very dim;
You could have led me safe to Him.
Though we lived together on the earth,
you never told me of the second birth,
and now I stand this day condemned,
Because you failed to mention Him.
You taught me many things, that's true,
I called you "friend" and trusted you,
But I learn now that it's too late,
You could have kept me from this fate.
We walked by day and talked by night,
And yet you showed me not the Light.
You let me live, and love, and die,
You knew I'd never live on high.
Yes, I called you a "friend" in life,
And trusted you through joy and strife.
And yet on coming to the end,
I cannot, now, call you "My Friend."
Marsha**

After reading the letter, Louise awoke. The dream was still so real in her mind and sweat dropped from her body in pools. She swore she could still smell the acrid smell of brimstone and smoke from her room.

As she contemplated the meaning of her dream, she realized that as a Christian, she had failed in her duty to "go out to all the world and preach the gospel." As she thought of that, she promised herself that the next day, she would call Marsha and invite her to church with her.

The next morning she called Marsha and this was the conversation:

Hello Bill, is Marsha there?

Louise, you don't know?

No, Bill, know what?

Marsha WAS KILLED LAST NIGHT IN A CAR ACCIDENT. I thought you new.

Fellow Christian, is this your testimony? Are you witnessing to your friends that you are with everyday? Or will there be a friend of yours in Hell, asking you why you did not tell them about JESUS?

MAKE A FRIEND!

BE A FRIEND!

LEAD A FRIEND TO CHRIST!

Now for something a little lighter!!

Two men are in an airplane that goes down on a deserted island.

One of the men brushed himself off and then proceeded to run all over the island to see if they had any chance of survival. When he returned, he rushed up to the other man and screamed, "This Island is uninhabited, there is no food, and there is no water. We are going to die!"

The other man leaned back against the fuselage of the wrecked plane, folded his arms and responded, "No we're not. I make over \$100,000 a week..."

The first man grabbed his friend and shook him. "Listen, we are on an uninhabited island. There is no food, no water. We are going to die!"

The other man, unruffled, again responded. "No, I make over \$100,000 a week."

Mystified, the first man, taken aback with such an answer again repeated, "For the last time, I'm telling you we are doomed. There is no one else on this island. There is no food. There is no water. We are, I repeat, we are going to die."

Still unfazed, the first man looked the other in the eyes and said, "Don't make me say this again. I make over \$100,000 per week. I tithe 10%.

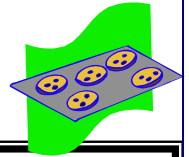
My pastor will find us."



If you haven't checked out the new Texas Kairos website yet, give it a look!

www.kairossoftexas.org

Kairos at the Michael Unit



"I was in prison and you visited me." Matthew 25:36

Mission Statement: The mission of Kairos is to bring Christ's love and forgiveness to all incarcerated individuals, their families, and those who work with them, and to assist in the transition of becoming a productive citizen.

Fifty thousand cookies. Three thousand letters of encouragement. Four hundred and fifty paper placemats created by children throughout East and North Texas. Seventy volunteers, 42 inmates and three days behind bars. This is only part of Kairos Prison Ministry, where seven ministers and 30 Christian men meet 42 prisoners on their turf to share the Gospel message. It's a spiritual retreat unlike any other, and those committed to the ministry see rewards going both ways. Mike Nix will lead a team of volunteers through a Kairos retreat at the Michael Unit in Tennessee Colony from November 4th through 7th. The volunteers are from Tyler, Kilgore, Whitehouse, Lindale, Hide-a-way Lake, Granbury, Ft. Worth, Arlington, Hurst, Bedford and Euless. He and his wife, Shawni, have been part of Kairos Prison Ministry since 2000. "Our goal is to start a Christian community behind the walls," Mike says. "We don't just go there for three days and leave because when the retreat is over, even though some of these men are ready for a new beginning, they're going back to the same old prison." Inmates professing a desire to lead a Christian life behind bars will be visited by Kairos team members on the second Saturday of each month for the next year. "Aftercare is just as important as the retreat weekend because that's when they see you're for real because you come back," Nix says. The Kairos team met five times — starting in September — to prepare for the November retreat. Although the men are the ones who go inside the prison to lead the ministry, their wives are equal participants, spending hours baking cookies before the weekend and even more hours at St. Phillips Episcopal Church in Palestine cooking two sumptuous meals a day for the 42 inmates, and the inside team. Each volunteer is responsible for baking about 70 dozen homemade cookies, Shawni Nix said. Cookies are a big part of the Kairos ministry. By the end of a Kairos ministry, every inmate and every guard at the Michael Unit will have at least a dozen homemade cookies. Nix and the other women volunteers typically prepare lasagna, barbecued brisket and hamburgers, salads, fresh fruit trays, pies and ice cream sundaes for the prisoners. The food itself is like heaven on earth for prisoners, whose meals don't include fresh fruit, vegetables or desserts. Strangers using their time and resources to prepare food and bless it before giving it to incarcerated men they've never met is one way to express unconditional love, Nix said. Each meal is presented on a paper placemat covered with a child's artwork and good wishes. The inmates often set the placemats aside because they want to keep them, she said. Other retreat preparation requires every team member to write a letter of encouragement to each of the 42 inmates who will participate. "The cookies and letters alone are a ministry," Nix said. "Some of these men have never received a letter from anyone since they've been incarcerated." During two days of instructional sessions, team members present the nuts and bolts of God's plan of salvation for all men through the death and resurrection of Jesus. "We give them the tools to work with if they want to change their lives," Nix said. "We talk to them about acceptance and forgiveness. Forgiveness is one of the biggest things we work on." But not all the men selected for the Kairos retreats are eager to hear the message. Prison chaplains choose some inmates who have expressed an interest in participating and some prison gang leaders and "hardheads" — men who have been incarcerated for long stretches of time. "If you can get the leader broke, the rest may follow," Nix said. "Some of them say they are just there (at the retreat) for the food. They sleep through the presentations. They don't want anyone to touch them or talk to them, so we leave them alone. It's not up to us to judge them. Our task is to listen, listen and love, love." Even among the roughest inmates, miracles happen, "God uses this (Kairos) to draw all his people together and closer to him," he said. "I've seen more miracles in prison than I've ever seen in a church." You can see God's love in action on a Kairos weekend during the time set aside to celebrate birthdays. Every Kairos retreat includes a Sunday celebration when the inmates are given a birthday cake, with all their names on it while team members wish them a "Happy Birthday" in song. "There was one 25-year-old man at my table that was as hard as a rock," team member Terry said. "He'd been in prison since he was 16, and for two days I tried to talk to him, but he never even smiled. When the team came in with the birthday cakes, he burst into tears and laid his head on the table and sobbed." When the inmate regained his composure, Terry asked him what was wrong. He told Terry his birthday was that day, and he'd never had a birthday party before. "You can go to church and read verses about God's love," Terry said, "but I never knew how big that love really is until I got involved in prison ministry." Mike Nix has seen prison gang leaders stand up and profess their faith in Christ, even though that profession is often akin to a death sentence. "Often they have to be put in protective custody or moved to another prison," he said. **"How strong is your faith? Would you die for it?"** Nix said prison is a place where there is no trust. "We want to change that," he said. "When you discover Christ, you discover that you're never alone, no matter what your circumstances. I just want them to know there's hope." *Pray for us this weekend Nov. 4th – 7th.* *Mike & Shawni Nix*

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